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ABSTRACT

The main impetus for peace education is the arms race, which places peace education in the conflict between conservatives advocating increased nuclear deterrence and liberals supporting nuclear disarmament. In the United States, education for peace is still in its infancy. Other developed nations, such as the Scandinavian countries and to a lesser degree Great Britain, have allocated more resources to peace education. Britain's experiences with this subject foreshadow future conflicts in the United States. There, conservatives have claimed that peace studies serve as a smokescreen for unilateral disarmament and left-wing politics and that peace studies are unsuitable for schools because they lack intellectual rigor and substance, are too complex for students to grasp, encourage prejudice, and attempt to manipulate the ideologies of young people, and that the results of such studies cannot be measured by standardized tests. These objections can be countered. For example, peace education, as an interdisciplinary approach, can be rigorous. Further, peace is no more complex a subject than are history, civics, and geography. Finally, all education, not just peace studies, shows a bias toward a preferred life-style, and if peace education does not fit in with greater standardization, then that is a virtue, not a fault. (IS)

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# THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF PEACE EDUCATION:

## The Conflict Between Deterrence and Disarmament

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In the United States, education for peace is still in its naive infancy. Within the continental borders of our nation, we have yet to experience directly any of the ravages of twentieth century warfare. Threats to internal security and international peace, therefore, are usually met through national defense policies calling for deterrence, mainly in the form of nuclear arms. Matters of war and peace are generally interpreted not so much as educational as military concerns, responsive to force and threats of force more than to intelligence, reason, persuasion, cooperation, and diplomacy. It is true that interest in peace and peace studies in the United States has gradually increased during the past decade in response to the Vietnam experience and the expensive nuclear arms race. In the eyes of some, however, particularly from the perspective of non-aligned, non-nuclear Third World nations, the arms race among superpowers threatens rather than enhances the prospects for international stability and the cause of world peace. Also, nuclear over-kill exacts an exorbitant price from nutrition, health, population control, education, and other human services in general. Nevertheless, it remains a question of blessing or curse whether the United States has yet to undergo the threat or terror of war to the point that the American society will direct educational resources and energies fully toward peace. How ironic that the same political persuasion which relies primarily on nuclear deterrence would also restrict the school curriculum to cognitive

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developments which limit or ignore the role of education in building peace and international understanding!

Other developed nations which have not been as fortunate as the United States in avoiding the direct and immediate consequences of war have allocated a greater degree of their intellectual and educational resources toward the cause of international peace. Especially Denmark, Norway, Sweden and West Germany, and later and to a lesser degree Great Britain, have initiated peace studies in their national curricula. Whatever one's view of Russian education, as a matter of national policy Soviet schools have precise responsibilities in education for peace, even if that role entails justification of national defense strategies and condemnation of what is viewed as preparation for aggression in the West. Developments in the West, however, have not been void of political turmoil, since the issues in preparing for or protecting against war become the issues surrounding peace education. Like other educational issues, such as prayer in public schools, tuition vouchers, teacher accountability and merit pay, the issues embroiled in peace education involve political implications as well as philosophical controversies.

The ideological foundations of peace education have usually been clear and strong. Prior to World War II, ideological pacifists utilized education to advocate an isolationist rejection of war. After 1945, the movement matured into a study of the causes of violence and the means of avoiding conflict. By the late 1960s, peace educators moved to a radical activism directed against structural violence perpetrated through acceptable though oppressive social institutions. The main impetus for peace education today is the international arms race which casts education for peace in the political turmoil between conservatives advocating increased nuclear deterrence and liberals supporting nuclear disarmament.

The political turmoil is especially evident at this stage in the development of peace education in Britain, where signs of future conflicts over peace education in America can now be previewed. By its activist association with the unilateralist cause of the Committee for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), according to Michael McCrum, Master of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and former head of Eton, the peace education movement in Britain has developed "a sinister and undesirable reputation."[2] In 1982, a UNESCO-funded research project reported on behalf of the Standing Conference on Education for International Understanding that peace studies in both tax-supported and independent secondary and higher education throughout Britain were politically slanted.[3] Another British commentator has noted that--

> There is nothing quite like Peace Studies these days for provoking the press and politicians, pundits and pedagogues into drawing up their battle lines.....Courses are accused of left-wing and unilateralist causes, of over-emphasizing the concept of structural violence, and of frequently ignoring the Soviet threat to peace....the conclusion is a formidable accusation: Peace Studies are an "innocuous" facade for a "serious political campaign."[4]

That pessimistic comment was prompted by the report of the Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies (IEDSS), entitled Peace Studies: A Critical Survey. The report claims that peace studies provide a smokescreen for unilateralist propaganda and as such are unsuitable for schools and colleges because they lack intellectual rigor and substance, encourage prejudice, and attempt to manipulate the political ideologies of young people.[5] The authors of the report, sociologist Caroline Cox and Birkbeck College philosophy professor Roger Scruton, contend that peace studies should be based on subject-matter disciplines, especially economics, politics, philosophy, logic, and military strategy. "The peace studies papers,"

they claim, "show a marked bias towards unilateralism, a pie-eyed and even whimsical approach to major problems of strategy, logic and moral and political philosophy, and an indifference towards the geopolitical situation which has caused the present crisis."[6]

As in other discussions of the controversies surrounding peace education, the IEDSS report raises the issue of curricular "relevance." If current controversies such as nuclear strategy, sex, the environment, the economy and so forth are discussed in schools by students who have yet to develop fundamental knowledge and critical intelligence, will there be space in the curriculum for traditional disciplines and basic intellectual skills? Thus, peace education provides a battle ground for rethrashing the conflicts over both the aims of education and the content of the curriculum.

According to Cox and Scruton, "The truly educational subject forces the pupil to understand something which has no immediate bearing on his or her experience."[7] The critical report on peace education is clearly premised on the assumption that there is no room in the school curriculum for any controversial issues relevant to the contemporary world such as those entailed in peace studies. The aim of education reflected by such a sterile curriculum, with "no immediate bearing" on the students' experiences, could hardly be anything resembling self-determination, critical intelligence, or meaningful participation in democratic decision making. There are strong reasons to suspect that those who view peace education as anti-nuclear-war or unilateral-disarmament propaganda also place education in the conservative mold of developing aristocratic leaders for the ignorant masses.

The concept of "structural violence" is a considerably distasteful topic to the opponents of peace education in Britain. As a topic for peace studies, structural violence is not just a problem of mindless irrationalism; in many cases, instances of violence assume the shape of deliberately

planned solutions to social problems and thereby become formally institutionalized in the bureaucratic structures of military, economic, political and educational organizations. On the surface, opponents of peace education have found little cause for concern over the search for non-violent resolutions to conflict among nations, organizations and individuals. However, they do claim that structural violence as a peace concept fails to make the necessary distinction between the tyranny of a totalitarian government and the violence inherent in the inequalities between employers and employees. To some, this point is sufficient evidence for the charge of bias against peace education. Of course, there is a distinction to be made between totalitarian political tyranny and unequal economic relationships, but that distinction is more likely to be one of degree rather than of kind.

Proponents of peace education in Britain are not at all oblivious to the ideological conflicts implicit in their educational endeavors. A 1981 conference on peace education at Atlantic College emphasized the conflicting ideological values inherent in peace studies which need to be spelled out specifically.[8] British peace educators also recognize that education for peace must be concerned, not only with international aggression and nuclear build-up or -down, but also with the many forms of violence imposed upon children and adolescents in their daily family and educational routines. Thus, while peace education raises old issues regarding the aims and content of education in a new context, it also provides a clearer basis for rethinking educational structures and processes. It is not likely that peace studies will succeed in schools dominated by psychic threats to the students' sense of well being; but, then, peace studies are not likely to be welcomed in such a school climate in the first place. Consequently, the presence and quality of peace curricula may well become future criteria for and indications of effective classroom climate.

These political reactions to peace studies in Britain have led to two contrasting approaches, one emphasizing defense and deterrence, the other arms control and disarmament, in an effort to balance conflicting political perspectives. The course of study on disarmament is proposed and supported by Teachers for Peace, an affiliate of the Committee for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). The course of study on deterrence, developed by the government-funded, pro-NATO British Atlantic Committee (BAC), presents the view that reliance on armaments, including nuclear weapons, ensures national security and provides a way of influencing the international political scene.[9] Presumably neutral in its political values, the BAC is a tax-exempt foundation established in support of the Atlantic Alliance. When complaints were lodged that some BAC publications were politically motivated, BAC split itself into a publications bureau and an overt propaganda bureau called Peace Through NATO. The difference between the two groups, however, especially in school relations, is reported to be a fine distinction. Local teachers' union throughout Britain have given top priority to disarmament, and the National Union of Teachers has debated the subject, with strong support for unilateral disarmament and equally strong opposition to the deployment of nuclear weapons in Britain.

Teachers associated with the Peace Education Network and other peace studies programs, however, have been accused by government officials speaking before the House of Commons of appeasement politics and peddling Soviet propaganda. Rhodes Boyson, junior minister of education, has criticized peace educators for their naivete and failure to distinguish between an enslaved East and the free West. Boyson alleges that---

> All people wish for peace, but real peace is not the absence of conflict, it is the creation of a free society which has the will to protect itself externally, and has the rule of law internally to safeguard individual freedom.....

> Left-wing peace studies in schools...could simply be an encouragement to lay down our arms and let anyone walk over us and destroy our society.[10]

Peace education in Britain, therefore, has become a major contention between Conservatives and Labourites. When the Labour party gained control of the Avon local educational authority in 1981, after seven years of Tory control, peace education was initiated to "encourage and promote...an educational programme showing the effects of nuclear war and the need for further disarmament."[11] Conservatives object that the program amounts to indoctrination, but Labourites retort that no alternatives to war are presented when arm-forces recruiters are invited into the schools.

Obstacles and Objections to Peace Education

The conflict over peace education in Britain itself provides one of the strongest arguments for peace education. But like education in general, or sex education, population education, religious education or career education, peace education is also many faceted and may incorporate controversial goals for conflicting reasons. The obstacles and objections to peace education, therefore, are also many and varied, but major issues of the controversy can be outlined.

1. Peace studies lack academic rigor and intellectual respectability. This objection is probably warranted to the extent that peace studies form a separate and independent aspect of the school curriculum. On the other hand, as an interdisciplinary approach integrating intellectual skills and academic disciplines, education for peace provides a contextual problem in which learning becomes relevant, meaningful, and respectful.

2. Peace studies are too complex to be discussed intelligently and critically by relatively immature minds. If this argument holds, history, geography, civics, and many other subjects would have to be removed from the school curriculum. The task of teaching is not to find problematic social

contexts simple enough for inexperienced students, but to match the experiences of students with clarified problems which they will face throughout life. Peace education must incorporate a wide array of topics from physical punishment to child abuse, and not just nuclear deterrence and disarmament.

3. Peace education will inevitably show bias toward one or another preferred life-style or set of international politico-military arrangements. Probably so, but then so does education in general. One of the main tasks for peace educators, therefore, is to demonstrate that peace education, in its value orientations, favors and promotes those same values of rationality, criticality, and humanity which underlie formal education in general. Certainly there is no justification for propaganda or indoctrination even, or especially, in the name of peace. But educators must relinquish the false goal of value-free inquiry. Inquiry and education are themselves values and incorporate and depend upon still other values. Peace education may do well to avoid controversial substantive values, such as nuclear disarmament and deterrence, and concentrate on procedural values, such as tolerance for different cultures, respect of other peoples, fairness, cooperation, equality, directness in communication, persuasion and reasoning.

4. The cognitive achievements in interdisciplinary peace studies are difficult to measure, and the affective growth in values conducive to peace and non-violence are impossible to measure through objective standardized testing procedures. What cannot be measured objectively cannot be utilized for teacher or student accountability to external authorities. Accordingly, peace education is viewed as detrimental to current political thrusts to regain excellence in education through external motivation, accountability, standardized testing, reward-punishment behavior modification and threats to ensure conformity, competency and acquiescence. No stronger objection to peace education could recommend it more!

END NOTES

[1]Address delivered to the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Studies Association, San Francisco, November 8 - 11, 1984.

[2]Quoted by Hilary Wilce in The Times Educational Supplement, 3482 (March 25, 1983), p. 13.

[3]The Times Educational Supplement, 3459 (October 15, 1982), p. 17.

[4]Derek Heater, The Times Educational Supplement, 3545 (June 8, 1984), p. 2.

[5]Caroline Cox and Roger Scruton, Peace Studies: A Critical Survey, Report of the Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies (13/14 Golden Square, London: Alliance Publishers, 1984).

[6]Quoted by Nick Wood in The Times Educational Supplement, 3544 (June 1, 1984), p. 6.

[7]Quoted by Derek Heater in The Times Educational Supplement, 3445 (June 8, 1984), p. 2.

[8]Bob Doe, The Times Educational Supplement, 3393 (July 3, 1981), p. 10.

[9]Hilary Wilce, The Times Educational Supplement, 3507 (September 16, 1983), p. 5.

[10]Quoted by Nick Wood in The Times Educational Supplement, 3436 (May 7, 1982), p. 6.

[11]The Times Educational Supplement, 3416 (December 18, 1981), p. 7.